



EPISCOPAL NEWS SERVICE

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2000-001

Church playing a role in rebuilding war-ravaged Liberia

by James E. Solheim

(ENS) The only lights burning at night in the streets of Liberia's capital city of Monrovia belong to the presidential palace and the headquarters of the national police. The city's million people, many of them refugees from the countryside who fled a brutal civil war, huddle around candles on the sidewalks. A few private generators supply light to homes, many of them owned by government officials or business leaders.

"This nation needs healing," Bishop Edward Neufville told a visiting team from the Episcopal Church in the USA. "The country is at a virtual standstill," he said. Liberia faces the daunting challenge of making peace with those who have brought the West African nation to its knees, authors of a senseless violence who show no signs of regret or repentance, according to the bishop. He expresses gratitude for the "timely" visit of the Americans as he lays out plans to show them how the church has suffered with the rest of the nation and is seeking to rebuild. "You started this church and we are confident that you will stand beside us as we usher in a new century."

An apprehensive calm has settled over much of the nation as it emerges from a decade of violence that affected nearly all of its three million citizens. An estimated 150,000 died as armed factions battled each other for control and terrorized the population until a fragile truce was shaped in 1997 and refugees began to return from neighboring countries. "Liberia is a post-war country, but not a post-conflict country," observed an international aid worker.

The ties between Liberia and the United States run deep since it was founded in 1822 by the American Colonization Society to create a homeland for freed American slaves. Americo-Liberians, who modeled their 1847 constitution on the U.S. system, ran the country until a 1980 coup, setting off decades of violent struggle.

The involvement of the Episcopal Church began about the time the nation was established. The first American missionaries were sent in 1836 and the first bishop chosen in 1851. "We have a lot of missionaries buried in Liberia," said the Rev. Ricardo Potter, associate director of Anglican and Global Relations (AGR) for the Episcopal Church, a member of the visitation team. He has visited the country three times in the last two years and is encouraged by the changes he has seen.

Potter points to what he called a "change in attitude," a whiff of hope in the air. "People are no longer waiting for the government to rescue them. They are finding their own ways of rebuilding," he said.

He was part of a meeting of the Joint Covenant Committee last April, the first meeting of the full committee in Liberia in nine years and was able to visit the whole diocese. As a result, the committee concluded that it is time for the Episcopal Church to help the Liberian church in its efforts to rebuild, concentrating on reopening the church schools.

A tradition of education

The Episcopal Church of Liberia has made a major contribution in the last century in the field of education, operating a system of elementary and secondary schools, as well as Cuttington University College, the only private university in West Africa. While the war damage is heavy, the buildings are structurally sound and could be easily rescued--with help.

After visiting a number of the schools, the visitation team concluded that education is an area where "our involvement could make an enormous difference--to the church and to the nation," said the church's treasurer, Stephen Duggan, a member of the team. "Look at the impact the church's schools have already had in the life of this nation. It is important that we assist in revitalizing the school system."

Addressing the risks of involvement in a country that is still politically unstable, Duggan said it represents too important an opportunity to "demonstrate our faith by stepping into a situation where we can help people realize their full humanity. And it is the right thing to do." Duggan is convinced of the possibility--and the necessity--of offering to help. "Our church has been there a long time," he emphasized. "It is like going back to family and discovering that they are in trouble and need some help."

Even though the "physical and psychological damage runs deep," Potter said, "we have the capacity to respond to the needs of a church that we planted." Liberians are confused and angry that the Americans are not helping them and Potter also hopes that the traditionally close ties can be reestablished, both with the nation and the church.

A recent survey by the diocese has estimated that it would need at least \$3 million to repair the school buildings. Cuttington has estimated it needs about \$5 million.

Brave and determined people

Wherever they went, members of the team met people who had endured and now expressed a determination to put their lives back together.

At the end of rough trips into the bush, on roads that can't be used during the rainy season, they were introduced to teachers who had gathered hundreds of students in the shells of buildings, feeding their minds and their bodies under very difficult conditions. "People have refused to give up--or to give in," said Margaret Larom, mission interpretation officer for the Episcopal Church. "We have an inspiring opportunity to make an impact--again."

The team got a glimpse of what was possible when they visited the site of Boys Town, a church facility that is being rebuilt with help from the American Refugee Committee. It is attempting to rescue orphans and street teens who have been traumatized by the war, many of them used as pawns of the military factions. "These are kids who killed people," said Shaun Skelton of the ARC. "Their families can't or won't take them in and they are ostracized by the community." With a radical change in environment, and some vocational training, he thinks the future may brighten for them.

At Bromley Mission, displaced children from the neighborhood gathered in a chapel at Julia Emery Hall, one of the few spaces on the campus that is functional. Yet the principal expressed optimism that it may be possible to open the boarding school next fall.

Cuttington University College, forced to close in 1990 when it had almost 900 students, is slowly coming to life again. A grant from the Presiding Bishop's Fund for World Relief helped Cuttington assess its needs after the civil war. "It is more difficult now, 50 years later, to rebuild because of these setbacks," President Melvin Mason told his visitors. "But after seven years of war, we are able to reassess and expand our programs. And we are able to pay more attention to the needs of the community." The team visited a small village near the campus where Cuttington has sponsored empowerment programs for women.

Mason admits that the obstacles are serious. It won't be possible to expand enrollments until there is some major improvement to facilities. Housing for faculty and staff is a major problem. Although there is no electricity or running water, a generator given to the school by Liberian President Charles Taylor provides a few hours of light to parts of the campus each day. Yet Mason said they are determined to admit another class next fall while maintaining standards in keeping with other Anglican colleges and universities.

With 1,500 acres, Cuttington was almost self-sufficient before the war, raising chickens and pigs and vegetables. The United Nations is helping to rebuild the school's capacity to feed itself. And a grant from American Schools and Hospitals Abroad may make it possible to rebuild the generators by the time the new class arrives next fall.

During the war, many of Cuttington's staff remained on campus to care for 7,000 refugees jammed into dormitory facilities, writing a proud new chapter in its history.

Ministry in context

While church officials are proud of their contribution in the field of education, they caution that it must be seen in a broader context. "Rebuilding must also include medical clinics so we can minister to the whole person," stressed Neufville. "While education is important, it should be seen in the context of the church's total ministry of outreach," added Gyude Bryant, a Monrovia businessman who chairs the diocesan board of trustees. "We don't have the resources to rebuild, to get the clergy back into the parishes."

Church leaders expressed deep concern for leaderless parishes, with no facilities for resident clergy. As a result, membership in many churches has been cut in half. The situation may improve as refugees who fled the country begin to return. Yet unemployment is also a factor. "Nobody is working so it is hard to rebuild the church," one person said. "We need zinc," added another, stressing that replacing the roofs of churches and homes that disappeared during the war would be a sign of hope.

"The question for us is how do we find a way to mobilize the resources of our church to strengthen this church," said Duggan. "It is not an overwhelming task."

Sandra Swan, executive director of the Presiding Bishop's Fund for World Relief, shares the excitement of her colleagues on the team. "And I'm convinced that members of our church will also share our enthusiasm for the rich possibilities for helping the church in Liberia rebuild," she said. She reported that the fund is already looking at ways it can cooperate with other agencies, church-related and secular, in those efforts.

"Since the children of Liberia have essentially been without education for almost 10 years, the situation has a sense of urgency," she added. "Every day is one more day lost in their education."

--James Solheim is director of the church's Office of News and Information and covered the Liberia visit for ENS.

2000-002

Delegation of bishops issues critical report after visit to the Episcopal Church

by James Solheim

(ENS) An international delegation of church leaders, who have expressed deep concerns about developments in the Episcopal Church and accepted an invitation from Presiding Bishop Frank T. Griswold to visit, has issued a report outlining the leaders' observations.

The 10-day fall visit was the result of a public letter in February, 1999, by a group of primates and archbishops that expressed alarm at some developments in the Episcopal Church, including repudiation in some dioceses of resolutions at the 1998 Lambeth Conference of Anglican bishops that condemned homosexual activity as "sinful" and deplored attempts to mandate the acceptance of women in the priesthood.

The report, issued by Archbishop Harry Goodhew of Sydney just before Christmas, began with a set of general impressions. It pointed to "the wide diversity that exists both between and within" the church's dioceses and to the "strong sense of loyalty" to the church. Despite some significant tensions, they observed "a strong desire on the part of many to hold ECUSA together."

The report added that the team "carried away an impression of people committed to their church but deeply divided over issues of great significance," especially sexuality issues and women's ordination. Pointing to what it called contradictions and inconsistencies, the team members said that some were prepared to press for recognition of same-sex relationships while "mandating the acceptance of the ordination of women to the priesthood."

Team members felt that they were being asked "to contemplate a paradox—those wishing to ignore the resolutions of Lambeth in respect of human sexuality were said to be strongest in wishing to enforce their interpretation of the Lambeth resolution on the crossing of diocesan boundaries" by bishops of another jurisdiction.

"We also became aware of a widespread appreciation of the conciliatory role of the current presiding bishop," the report said. "Some believe that now, in a way that was not previously the case, conservatives are given an opportunity for their case to be presented and their voice heard." Others said that Griswold's signature on the Koinonia Statement, presented to the House of Bishops in 1994 by Bishop John Spong of Newark, caused a problem. The statement argued that sexuality was "morally neutral" and that it was possible for gays and lesbians to lead holy lives that could be blessed by the church.

In a section offering advice to the presiding bishop, the team encouraged him "to consider some action that would re-position himself with regard to the Koinonia Statement," suggesting that "his status as a mediator would be greatly enhanced, especially in the eyes of the more conservative elements of the church, if he were not seen as giving public support to one side of the issue."

Looking at the evidence

The report wandered into the raging debate over the sources of homosexual orientation and the possibilities of leaving that lifestyle, outlining arguments based on Scripture and scientific evidence. "We are bound to comment that our appreciation of the situation leads us to believe that the case for justifying a homosexual lifestyle on the available evidence is grossly overstated."

During its visit to different parts of the church, the team heard testimonies on both sides of the issue. From a non-Western perspective, the report said, the team saw "Western culture cutting itself adrift from its Judeo-Christian roots and suffering a consequent moral and intellectual confusion that makes space for values of a more pagan kind to take root and flourish."

The report also noted "a certain conflict fatigue," an eagerness by many to move on with the mission of the church. "We all had sympathy with that sentiment but recognized the truth that the point of conflict is the place where faithfulness is tested and loyalty demonstrated. While some said they found dialogue valuable, others told the team that it was also perceived as "a device to weaken conservative resolve while radicals continue to move ahead with unacceptable practices."

Identifying the issues

In a section that identified issues, the report began with sources of authority, asking "what are the instruments that give us the ability to determine on matters relating to sexual morality?" Anglicans depend on Scripture, reason/experience and tradition but "we encountered a tendency to submit Scripture to experience rather than the other way around."

The report also found reasons to believe that in parts of the church the "liberal agenda" supports homosexuality and "mandating the acceptance of the ordination of women is coercively applied." Because most in the Anglican Communion regard homosexuality as sinful, "we consider that universal responsibility must over-ride local preference. Anglicanism is indeed in favor of local contextualization but not in contradiction to universal norms," it concluded.

Dialogue is important where there are differences but "on this issue of sexuality we hold that the dialogue has been abused by the unauthorized introduction of changes that presuppose a particular outcome to that dialogue. This impaired process has in fact jeopardized Anglican continuity." The report urged the presiding bishop to "find ways to strengthen the framework that will make possible both obedience and dialogue."

The report also argued for alternative oversight where parishes are in conflict with their bishops, "much to be preferred to congregations either leaving ECUSA or seeking episcopal oversight from elsewhere in the Communion. Such an arrangement may go some way to meet the needs of those who might otherwise seek for the creation of a second, recognized Anglican province in the USA," it concluded.

The report was signed by Archbishop Maurice Sinclair, primate of the Church in the Southern Cone of America; Bishop Simon Makundi, representing Tanzania; Bishop Peter Njenga Karioki, representing Kenya; Bishop John Rucyahana-Kabango, representing Rwanda, and Goodhew.

Another meeting, same issues

Several members of the visitation team also participated in a mid-November meeting in Kampala, Uganda, discussing many of the same issues. At the end of the consultation, which included a number of conservative representatives from the Episcopal Church, an open letter signed by primates and archbishops from Africa, Southeast Asia and South America reassured them "We also hear and understand what you have told us about examples of abandonment of Anglican teaching, discipline and practices in the provinces from which you come. We share your distress on account of the damage and harmful results of these increasingly serious developments."

The letter suggested that some of the church leaders would be "ready to respond to specific and urgent situations which may arise in the months before the Primates' Meeting in Portugal," scheduled for March 23-28. "Parishes and clergy under threat because of their loyalty to the Gospel and to Anglican standards must be supported and we will play our part in such support." The letter also said that it would tell the rest of the primates about the "intolerable situation" faced by some traditionalists, offering to "carefully document and commend a proposal to this meeting which, we believe, will address the problems in our Communion caused by misuse of provincial autonomy and innovations exceeding the limits of our Anglican diversity."

The letter cited a resolution opening the possibility of "emergency" intervention in provinces of the Communion and one condemning homosexual activity and advising against blessing same-sex relationships.

The letter was signed by the primates of Rwanda (E.M. Kolini), Uganda (Livingstone Mpalanyi-Nkoyoyo), Congo (Patrice Byanka Njojo), Burundi (Samuel Ndayisenga), Southeast Asia (Moses Tay), Tanzania (Donald Mtetemala), Southern Cone of America (Maurice Sinclair) and Bishop M.B. Dawidi representing the Sudan, and Bishop Peter Njenga representing the primate of Kenya.

Different interpretations

Some attending the meeting hoped for immediate redress of their grievances, according to some news reports, maybe even an endorsement for another province in the United States to protect traditionalists.

Bishop James Stanton of Dallas told the *Church of England Newspaper*, "Our position has been that while we believe there are great difficulties in ECUSA, particularly with some liberal bishops running roughshod over their people, we felt that whatever actions taken had to be in unison. What Lambeth called for was action by the primates as a whole." He said that the American bishops were supporting Griswold's attempts to carve out a time of Jubilee for the church. "Whether the presiding bishop will pull it off is going to be a real test," he said in the interview with CEN. "He has problems to contend with. There are some very impatient people who don't much care for conversation. For them the issue is decided, they are going to move forward."

The Rev. Bill Atwood of Ekklesia, an organization of conservatives in the Episcopal Church, told CEN, "It was not crazy hotheads throwing hand grenades but concerned people expressing responsible grief and trying to chart a course through to prevent explosions."

The primates told some participants that they were making plans, holding out the possibility of acting before the March meeting in Portugal, but declined to discuss specifics. "We were asked simply to trust them, and we affirmed that we would," said the Rev. Richard Kim of Michigan.

For a complete report on the delegation visit www.anglicanmediasydney.asn.au

—James Solheim is director of the Episcopal Church's Office of News and Information.

2000-003

Lutherans address opponents of full communion with Episcopalians

by James Solheim

(ENS) Lutheran opponents to a proposal for full communion between the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America (ELCA) and the Episcopal Church have organized and demanded that church leaders address their concerns.

About 400 delegates from 21 states gathered in St. Paul last November to organize as Word Alone, arguing that an acceptance of the historic episcopate by Lutherans, a major point in the "Called to Common Mission" (CCM) proposal passed by the ELCA Churchwide Assembly last summer, contradicts the doctrine that the word of God and proper administration of the sacraments are sufficient for salvation. They argue that CCM threatens Lutheran identity, seriously changing the role of bishops and diminishing the role of laity.

The delegates emerged from a series of 45 regional meetings last fall attended by about 2,200 people who have reservations about CCM. More regional meetings are planned, culminating in a national conference in March to determine the shape and direction of the organization.

Although some delegates said they would leave the ELCA if the proposal were implemented, most delegates favored remaining in the ELCA to engage in "active opposition" in an attempt to block implementation of the proposal; they did discuss a number of alternatives. Among the possibilities they discussed were forming a parallel organization with its own roster of clergy and congregations opposing CCM; electing bishops who pledge they won't comply; cutting financial support for the national church.

The Rev. Brad Jenson of Duluth called for formation of a new Lutheran church "which is solidly confessional" and a new seminary to prepare clergy for "non-episcopal ordinations."

"We will resist, we will not comply," said the Rev. Roger Eigenfeld of Mahtomedi, Minnesota, elected to chair the organization's steering committee. "We feel the church has walked away from us and is not listening." He brushed aside proposals for a new church, calling them "incredibly premature and totally unnecessary at this point." Yet he admitted that "eventually we're going to have to decide if it's worth the effort to fight for the church or to go our own way."

Addressing concerns

Presiding Bishop H. George Anderson of the ELCA met with Eigenfeld in December at the church offices in Chicago to discuss the issue. Both expressed eagerness to foster genuine dialogue and avoid further confrontation. Eigenfeld said that many Word Alone members aren't sure there is a place for them in the ELCA. "If this church is going to wait around for two years to take care of a sore, it's too late," he said referring to the biennial Churchwide Assembly's next meeting.

In adopting CCM the church made a serious decision, Anderson pointed out, knowing that there would be opposition. "As a church, we are concerned about those people and their consciences. We are prepared to listen, but we are not at the point that we will grant exceptions to an action the church has taken," he said.

Anderson attended regional meetings of opponents last fall, describing them as "tough." He said, "These are really good people and they are really mad. We must find a way to address their underlying concerns."

"We are challenged to take action in living into full communion with other churches which will move us onto terrain yet unexplored," said the Rev. Daniel Martensen, director of the ELCA's Department for Ecumenical Affairs following a meeting last fall. The ELCA is in full communion with four other churches—the Moravian, Presbyterian Church (USA), Reformed and United Church of Christ.

—James Solheim is director of the Episcopal Church's Office of News and Information.

000-004

Episcopal Church in Burundi supporting fragile peace process

by James Solheim

(ENS) A delegation from the Anglican Peace and Justice Network (APJN) returned from a late-November trip to Burundi sobered by the continuing violence but cautiously hopeful that the fragile peace process may have a chance.

"We were eager to express our solidarity with members of the Episcopal Church in Burundi, to listen to their stories of faith and suffering, and to encourage their participation in peace efforts. But we also wanted to see the situation for ourselves," said the Rev. Brian Grieves, the Episcopal Church's director of peace and justice ministries. Bishop Pie Ntukamazina had issued an open invitation.

Burundi gained its independence from Belgium in 1962 and struggled with democracy until 1966 when ethnic Tutsis dominated the government. That lasted until 1993 when a new democracy was established. The assassination of the new president after just three months in office unleashed an era of chaos and retributions by the ethnic Hutu factions. The genocide killed an estimated 150,000 Tutsi and, since then, another 50,000-100,000 people have been killed in civil strife.

A 1996 coup "had the effect of calming the chaos that had gripped the country since 1993," the delegation report said. "After a tense period, and with the helpful intervention of the Episcopal Church of Burundi and others, the elected National Assembly or parliament resumed its functions," forming a government of national unity.

"Since that time a painfully slow peace process has been established with Julius Nyerere of Tanzania serving as mediator" in a process named for the Tanzanian city of Arusha where the meetings were held. The struggle has been to include those rebel groups who have engaged in armed conflict throughout the country. "A cease-fire to end the violence is not possible until these factions are brought into negotiations," the delegation concluded.

Atmosphere of distrust

"There is enormous distrust among the various political groups," the report observed. "Civil society has a very low regard of politicians," regarding some of them as "perpetrators of the genocide." Yet there are signs of hope because "the government and political parties working within the country have made impressive strides in reaching agreement on a framework for peace and a new government."

The agreements call for a transition period of five years and a period of "democratic consolidation" for another five years. And there is agreement on a Truth and Reconciliation Commission, modeled on the experience in South Africa. "The progress in developing these agreements is remarkable given the recent genocide," the report said. Yet the efforts have not been supported by the international community, provoking resentment in various parts of the government.

The death of Nyerere has threatened to halt the peace process, but Nelson Mandela, who retired recently as president of South Africa, will assume the role of mediator and "bring new impetus to the pursuit of a just peace."

The delegation learned very quickly that the relations between Tutsis and Hutus are "very complicated," concluding that "it is simplistic and even racist stereotyping" to assume that each hates the other. "Certainly, there is no doubt that there are factions in both ethnic groups who exploit ethnic differences and fuel hatred and commit horrendous atrocities. But it is also obvious that most Hutus and Tutsis are prepared to live together as neighbors much as they have done for centuries prior to the arrival of the colonists."

While it is easy for many in the international community to reduce the conflict to an ethnic one, the team observed that "many persons from the two ethnic groups, both in the church and the government, working together to overcome the chaos and discord created by the genocide."

In reality, attempts to forge a peace agreement are complicated by divisions in the neighboring states of the area called the Great Lakes region. An accord that has attempted to end the conflict in the region "is extremely fragile and appears to be unraveling," warned the report. "The delegation was very disturbed by the extent to which the violence is perpetuated as a direct consequence of arms transfers."

A role for the church

"The Episcopal Church of Burundi has provided significant leadership during the current conflict, encouraging the different groups to join together for the good of the nation and to forge ahead towards peace," the report concluded. In the wake of the 1996 coup the church's role "may have prevented a further downward spiral of the violence and chaos," serving with other churches as facilitators between the elected officials who went into hiding and the leaders of the coup. "This facilitation process made possible the success of forming the present government of unity" by helping to keep the elected officials in the country.

In its recommendations, the team called on the new mediator for the Arusha talks "to work urgently to bring all legitimate parties into the peace process, with the support of the present groups now in the talks, so that all voices can be heard." And it said that a cease-fire is "the highest priority," followed by the return of all those who have been displaced by the

war. It also called on church partners throughout the Anglican Communion to send relief to the church in Burundi to alleviate the suffering in the refugee camps.

The APJN report called for an international inquiry into the arms trade in the area and supported a meeting of Anglican leaders in the Great Lakes area to discuss peace initiatives.

In its conclusion, the team said that it was leaving Burundi more hopeful than when it arrived and would not “underestimate the enormous task that lies ahead for the leadership of the country. But it did find both a faithful church and many men and women in the government who hold the promise and the key to success. The churches role in reconciliation, justice and truth will be crucial to the implementation of any peace agreements,” it said.

—James Solheim is director of the Church’s Office of News and Information.

2000-005

Tutu scolds church leaders for their complicit role in creating divisions

by James Solheim

(ENS) Standing in the pulpit of Martin Luther King, Jr. in Atlanta’s historic Ebenezer Baptist Church, Archbishop Desmond Tutu reminded his audience that the greatest evils of the 20th century—including the racist apartheid policy in his native South Africa—were wrought by Christians, not pagans.

“It was Christians, you know, not pagans, who were responsible for the Holocaust. It was Christians, not pagans, who lynched people here in the South... who burned people at the stake, frequently in the name of this Jesus Christ,” the Nobel laureate told participants in the annual meeting of the U.S. Conference for the World Council of Churches (WCC).

Christians should seek unity and reject the divisions that make reconciliation difficult, he argued. “We should cringe with shame at the chaotic situation in Jerusalem at the Church of the Holy Sepulcher,” he said, using the tension among different groups who claim space in the church as an example. “It has taken three years to get the Christian custodians to agree that a sewer cover should be removed and the sewer replaced,” Tutu said. “We should hang our heads in shame that it could happen on the site of the Crucifixion.” He added, with that famous twinkle in his eyes, “If Christ had not risen from the dead we would say that he is turning in his grave.”

Tutu thanked the WCC for its support of the fight against apartheid in South Africa. Pointing to Pamela Chinnis, president of the Episcopal Church’s House of Deputies, he said that she was “one of those who came when the South African Council of Churches was being investigated by the South African government.” As a result of international support by the churches, “We in South Africa are now an extraordinary thing, a free country, trying to be non-racist and non-sexist.... You are responsible for this victory.”

No cheap reconciliation

Tutu joined church leaders at the meeting for a visit to the crypt of King, placing a wreath in honor of the slain civil rights leader. King was slated to address the fourth assembly of the WCC in Sweden in July of 1968 but was assassinated three months before the meeting. Participants said that he was profoundly missed and his absence led the WCC to form the Program to Combat Racism and other justice programs.

Prof. Miroslav Volf of Yale Divinity School warned participants against seeking “cheap reconciliation,” suggesting that there are some crimes so horrible that reconciliation seems almost impossible. The Nazis may have been “masters of death” but the Holocaust is not an anomaly in today’s world. The systematic genocide in Kosovo and Rwanda “is a brutal and horrid testimony of exclusion.... Reconciliation must be at the center of what Christians pursue. But how can Nazi and Jew, Kosovar and Serb, Hutu and Tutsi reconcile?” he asked.

Some seek “false ways” of resolving tensions, including “cheap reconciliation” that “gives up on justice.” He quoted Nietzsche’s observation that “all pursuit of justice rests on partial injustices and results in new injustices.” Reconciliation is possible only if factions are “unconditionally” willing to embrace one another,” he said. “The will to embrace includes the will to rectify the wrong that has been done.”

The Rev. Konrad Raiser, general secretary of the WCC, said that there are dangers in uncovering truth in the search for reconciliation. “It can open wounds and thus reinforce division,” he said. “While it is true that truth can liberate, it can also become a burden that crushes both the victim and the victimizer.”

Reconciliation is not a technique but “remains a gift of God and therefore the source of new life. May the churches learn again to be reconciled with God so that they can become agents of reconciliation in today’s world,” he said.

—James Solheim is director of the Episcopal Church’s Office of News and Information.

2000-006

Clear Vision conference catches imagination and fuels positive changes for Church

by Carol E. Barnwell

(ENS) Camp Allen, situated in the piney woods of the Texas hill country, again played host to bishops and their staffs seeking a new, revitalized vision for their dioceses. “Encore, A Clear Vision of One Church,” drew more than 250 participants for the pre-Thanksgiving conference hosted by the Dioceses of Texas, Virginia, Maryland and Tennessee.

Sessions on visioning and church planting were augmented by 16 workshops and interactive panel discussions. “This year’s conference was primarily a ‘how to,’” building on the “big picture view” from last year’s conference said Carolyn Dicer of East Tennessee.

Stuart Entwistle, director of financial development from the Diocese of Maryland, was delighted at the “cross section of church leadership” present at the conference. “It’s critical to have insights about the strength of the church—to get a more global view,” he said. “It’s also rewarding to have the opportunity to share my ministry with a different group and get feedback—to know what I have can be of help to others.”

“We plan to plant a new church every year,” said the Bishop of Spain, Carlos Lopez, who brought four clergy and four lay leaders with him. For 40 years, the Anglican Church in Spain was forced underground by the government, he explained. “This conference has helped us identify our maintenance mentality and systemized our thoughts about what we must do to transform the culture of our Church.”

During a panel discussion on leadership, the Rev. Hugh Magers, Evangelism Officer for the Episcopal Church, called for Commissions on Ministry to become proactive in seeking younger postulants. Calling the clergy shortage “a crisis,” he said a bias against those younger than 35 has caused the problem. The dichotomy between clergy and lay leadership was also raised.

The Very Rev. Jim Lemler, President and Dean of Seabury Western, called for more leadership education. “Theological education must equip leaders,” he said, a sentiment echoed by the Rev. Kevin Martin, Canon for Mission and Congregational Development in the Diocese of Texas. “If ordination isn’t about leadership, then what is it about?” Martin asked, pointing out that much of the current leadership in the Church is frozen in place by a maintenance culture. “If you look behind and no one is following you, you’re just out taking a walk,” quipped Magers in his characteristic dry humor.

“We are delighted so many people were able to join us in this most important work,” said the Bishop Claude E. Payne, of Texas. “In this time of terrific spiritual hunger, we must move into the future, united in our focus on mission and in reaching those who are currently outside the Church.” Payne’s presentation demonstrated how his “vision” has touched every aspect of church life in the Diocese of Texas. Bishops Peter J. Lee and David C. Jones of Virginia addressed church planting. Bishops Robert Ihloff of Maryland and Bertram Herlong of Tennessee led panel discussions.

Participants from 39 dioceses included four foreign countries, Mexico, Uruguay, Spain and Honduras. Representatives from the national Episcopal Church Center also attended.

—Carol E. Barnwell is editor of the *Texas Episcopalian*, the newspaper of the Diocese of Texas.

2000-007

Theological Education Sunday set for February 6

by Kathryn McCormick

(ENS) How do you learn about God? In classes, in discussion groups, quietly chatting, reading? Theological education never really stops as Episcopalians explore not only the great issues that affect the church as a whole but those small points when each individual sees God working in his or her life. On February 6 this lifelong learning—and teaching—process will be acknowledged and celebrated in parishes across the church.

Theological Education Sunday is a special time in the church calendar when all church members can be encouraged to search for knowledge of God and to help make educational opportunities available to people of all ages.

“Theological education occurs in congregations, diocesan schools, and special programs,” noted Presiding Bishop Frank T. Griswold in a letter last fall to clergy and others across the church. “Corporate board rooms, hospital bedsides, prison cells and picket lines call can be places of revelation. We gain insight about our relationship to God when we reflect prayerfully on life’s experiences in light of the Gospel.”

He stressed that the *new* TES replaces a day in the church calendar when the church's 11 seminaries made an appeal for support. In 1982, the General Convention called on parishes and dioceses to provide regular financial support through annual contributions of 1 percent of their net disposable budget income. Each contribution was strictly voluntary.

Not only was the response weak (less than one third of churches make contributions), but the passage of the 1-percent resolution resulted in the day's diminishing importance in the life of the church, according to the church's Office for Ministry Development. In 1997, the General Convention asked the presiding bishop to designate a new Theological Education Sunday and, with the Council of Deans of the Episcopal seminaries, he chose the first Sunday in February.

"Actually, theological education doesn't have to be celebrated precisely on that Sunday," said the Rev. Lynne Grifo, associate coordinator for Ministry Development. "It can be at a more convenient time. The point is to understand how the whole church can embrace the mission of providing broad and accessible education to everyone who wants it."

Having set a date, the deans also began to explore new ways to talk about theological education as something more than seminarians in classrooms.

That marked the beginning of an ambitious video project likely to be launched in 2001. It will include a three-part video series made available to as many audiences as possible. Seminarians will be called on to present the videos and to talk about education.

The first video in the series, Grifo said, will stress the importance of theological education in Christian life and as a lifelong pursuit. The second will show examples of ongoing education in schools, churches and elsewhere, and the third will challenge audiences to think about they and their communities might become involved in the educational mission.

The project's proposal calls for videotaping at 30 sites around the country, producing supplementary materials such as directories of resources for use by parishes, and producing a large number of sets of the videos for widespread use. The deans anticipate that much of the financing for the project will be in place within coming months.

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--Kathryn McCormick is associate director of the Office of News and Information of the Episcopal Church.



news digest

2000-001D

Church playing a role in rebuilding war-ravaged Liberia

(ENS) The only lights burning at night in the streets of Liberia's capital city of Monrovia belong to the presidential palace and the headquarters of the national police. The city's million people, many of them refugees from the countryside who fled a brutal civil war, huddle around candles on the sidewalks. A few private generators supply light to homes, many of them owned by government officials or business leaders.

"This nation needs healing," Bishop Edward Neufville told a visiting team from the Episcopal Church in the USA. "The country is at a virtual standstill," he said. Liberia faces the daunting challenge of making peace with those who have brought the West African nation to its knees, authors of a senseless violence who show no signs of regret or repentance, according to the bishop. He expresses gratitude for the "timely" visit of the Americans as he lays out plans to show them how the church has suffered with the rest of the nation and is seeking to rebuild. "You started this church and we are confident that you will stand beside us as we usher in a new century."

An apprehensive calm has settled over much of the nation as it emerges from a decade of violence that affected nearly all of its three million citizens. An estimated 150,000 died as armed factions battled each other for control and terrorized the population until a fragile truce was shaped in 1997 and refugees began to return from neighboring countries. "Liberia is a post-war country, but not a post-conflict country," observed an international aid worker.

The ties between Liberia and the United States run deep since it was founded in 1822 by the American Colonization Society to create a homeland for freed American slaves. Americo-Liberians, who modeled their 1847 constitution on the U.S. system, ran the country until a 1980 coup, setting off decades of violent struggle.

The involvement of the Episcopal Church began about the time the nation was established. The first American missionaries were sent in 1836 and the first bishop chosen in 1851. "We have a lot of missionaries buried in Liberia," said the Rev. Ricardo Potter, associate director of Anglican and Global Relations (AGR) for the Episcopal Church, a member of the visitation team. He has visited the country three times in the last two years and is encouraged by the changes he has seen.

Potter points to what he called a "change in attitude," a whiff of hope in the air. "People are no longer waiting for the government to rescue them. They are finding their own ways of rebuilding," he said.

The Episcopal Church of Liberia has made a major contribution in the last century in the field of education, operating a system of elementary and secondary schools, as well as

Cuttington University College, the only private university in West Africa. While the war damage is heavy, the buildings are structurally sound and could be easily rescued--with help.

After visiting a number of the schools, the visitation team concluded that education is an area where "our involvement could make an enormous difference--to the church and to the nation," said the church's treasurer, Stephen Duggan, a member of the team. "Look at the impact the church's schools have already had in the life of this nation. It is important that we assist in revitalizing the school system."

A recent survey by the diocese has estimated that it would need at least \$3 million to repair the school buildings. Cuttington has estimated it needs about \$5 million.

Wherever they went, members of the team met people who had endured and who expressed a determination to put their lives back together.

At the end of rough trips into the bush, on roads that can't be used during the rainy season, they were introduced to teachers who had gathered hundreds of students in the shells of buildings, feeding their minds and their bodies under very difficult conditions. "People have refused to give up--or to give in," said Margaret Larom, mission interpretation officer for the Episcopal Church. "We have an inspiring opportunity to make an impact--again."

The team got a glimpse of what was possible when they visited the site of Boys Town, a church facility that is being rebuilt with help from the American Refugee Committee. It is attempting to rescue orphans and street teens who have been traumatized by the war, many of them used as pawns of the military factions. "These are kids who killed people," said Shaun Skelton of the ARC. "Their families can't or won't take them in and they are ostracized by the community." With a radical change in environment, and some vocational training, he thinks the future may brighten for them.

Cuttington University College, forced to close in 1990 when it had almost 900 students, is slowly coming to life again. A grant from the Presiding Bishop's Fund for World Relief helped Cuttington assess its needs after the civil war. "It is more difficult now, 50 years later, to rebuild because of these setbacks," President Melvin Mason told his visitors. "But after seven years of war, we are able to reassess and expand our programs. And we are able to pay more attention to the needs of the community." The team visited a small village near the campus where Cuttington has sponsored empowerment programs for women.

Mason admits that the obstacles are serious. It won't be possible to expand enrollments until there is some major improvement to facilities. Housing for faculty and staff is a major problem.

Church leaders expressed deep concern for leaderless parishes, with no facilities for resident clergy. As a result, membership in many churches has been cut in half. The situation may improve as refugees who fled the country begin to return. Yet unemployment is also a factor. "Nobody is working so it is hard to rebuild the church," one person said. "We need zinc," added another, stressing that replacing the roofs of churches and homes that disappeared during the war would be a sign of hope.

Sandra Swan, executive director of the Presiding Bishop's Fund for World Relief, shares the excitement of her colleagues on the team. "And I'm convinced that members of our church will also share our enthusiasm for the rich possibilities for helping the church in Liberia rebuild," she said. She reported that the fund is already looking at ways it can cooperate with other agencies, church-related and secular, in those efforts.

"Since the children of Liberia have essentially been without education for almost 10 years, the situation has a sense of urgency," she added. "Every day is one more day lost in their education." --James Solheim

2000-002D

Delegation of bishops issues critical report after visit to the Episcopal Church

(ENS) An international delegation of church leaders, who have expressed deep concerns about developments in the Episcopal Church and accepted an invitation from Presiding Bishop Frank T. Griswold to visit, has issued a report outlining the leaders' observations.

The 10-day fall visit was the result of a public letter in February, 1999, by a group of primates and archbishops that expressed alarm at some developments in the Episcopal Church, including repudiation in some dioceses of resolutions at the 1998 Lambeth Conference of Anglican bishops that condemned homosexual activity and deplored attempts to mandate the acceptance of women in the priesthood.

The report, issued by Archbishop Harry Goodhew of Sydney November 24, began with a set of general impressions. It pointed to "the wide diversity that exists both between and within" the church's dioceses and to the "strong sense of loyalty" to the church. Despite some significant tensions, they observed "a strong desire on the part of many to hold ECUSA together."

The report added that the team "carried away an impression of people committed to their church but deeply divided over issues of great significance," especially sexuality issues and women's ordination.

Team members felt that they were being asked "to contemplate a paradox—those wishing to ignore the resolutions of Lambeth in respect to human sexuality were said to be strongest in wishing to enforce their interpretation of the Lambeth resolution on the crossing of diocesan boundaries" by bishops of another jurisdiction.

"We also became aware of a widespread appreciation of the conciliatory role of the current presiding bishop," the report said. "Some believe that now, in a way that was not previously the case, conservatives are given an opportunity for their case to be presented and their voice heard." Others said that Griswold's signature on the Koinonia Statement, presented to the House of Bishops in 1994 by Bishop John Spong of Newark, caused a problem. The statement argued that sexuality was "morally neutral" and that it was possible for gays and lesbians to lead holy lives that could be blessed by the church.

In a section offering advice to the presiding bishop, the team encouraged him "to consider some action that would re-position himself with regard to the Koinonia Statement," suggesting that "his status as a mediator would be greatly enhanced, especially in the eyes of the more conservative elements of the church, if he were not seen as giving public support to one side of the issue."

The report also noted "a certain conflict fatigue," an eagerness by many to move on with the mission of the church. "We all had sympathy with that sentiment but recognized the truth that the point of conflict is the place where faithfulness is tested and loyalty demonstrated. While some said they found dialogue valuable, others told the team that it was also perceived as "a device to weaken conservative resolve while radicals continue to move ahead with unacceptable practices."

In a section that identified issues, the report began with sources of authority, asking "what are the instruments that give us the ability to determine on matters relating to sexual morality?" Anglicans depend on Scripture, reason/experience and tradition but "we encountered a tendency to submit Scripture to experience rather than the other way around."

Dialogue is important where there are differences but “on this issue of sexuality we hold that the dialogue has been abused by the unauthorized introduction of changes that presuppose a particular outcome to that dialogue. This impaired process has in fact jeopardized Anglican continuity.” The report urged the presiding bishop to “find ways to strengthen the framework that will make possible both obedience and dialogue.”

The report also argued for alternative oversight where parishes are in conflict with their bishops, “much to be preferred to congregations either leaving ECUSA or seeking episcopal oversight from elsewhere in the Communion. Such an arrangement may go some way to meet the needs of those who might otherwise seek for the creation of a second, recognized Anglican province in the USA,” it concluded.

The report was signed by Archbishop Maurice Sinclair, primate of the Church in the Southern Cone of America; Bishop Simon Makundi, representing Tanzania; Bishop Peter Njenga Karioki, representing Kenya; Bishop John Rucyahana-Kabango, representing Rwanda, and Goodhew.

For a complete report on the delegation visit www.anglicanmediasydney.asn.au.

—James Solheim

2000-003D

Lutherans address opponents of full communion with Episcopalians

(ENS) Lutheran opponents to a proposal for full communion between the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America (ELCA) and the Episcopal Church have organized and demanded that church leaders address their concerns.

About 400 delegates from 21 states gathered in St. Paul last November to organize as Word Alone, arguing that an acceptance of the historic episcopate by Lutherans, a major point in the “Called to Common Mission” (CCM) proposal passed by the ELCA Churchwide Assembly last summer, contradicts the doctrine that the word of God and proper administration of the sacraments are sufficient for salvation. They argue that CCM threatens Lutheran identity, seriously changing the role of bishops and diminishing the role of laity.

The delegates emerged from a series of 45 regional meetings last fall attended by about 2,200 people who have reservations about CCM. More regional meetings are planned, culminating in a national conference in March to determine the shape and direction of the organization.

Although some delegates said they would leave the ELCA if the proposal were implemented, most delegates favored remaining in the ELCA to engage in “active opposition” in an attempt to block implementation of the proposal; they did discuss a number of alternatives. Among the possibilities they discussed were forming a parallel organization with its own roster of clergy and congregations opposing CCM; electing bishops who pledge they won’t comply; cutting financial support for the national church.

The Rev. Brad Jenson of Duluth called for formation of a new Lutheran church “which is solidly confessional” and a new seminary to prepare clergy for “non-episcopal ordinations.”

“We will resist, we will not comply,” said the Rev. Roger Eigenfeld of Mahtomedi, Minnesota, elected to chair the organization’s steering committee. “We feel the church has

walked away from us and is not listening.” He brushed aside proposals for a new church, calling them “incredibly premature and totally unnecessary at this point.” Yet he admitted that “eventually we’re going to have to decide if it’s worth the effort to fight for the church or to go our own way.”

Presiding Bishop H. George Anderson of the ELCA met with Eigenfeld in December at the church offices in Chicago to discuss the issue. Both expressed eagerness to foster genuine dialogue and avoid further confrontation. Eigenfeld said that many Word Alone members aren’t sure there is a place for them in the ELCA. “If this church is going to wait around for two years to take care of a sore, it’s too late,” he said referring to the biennial Churchwide Assembly’s next meeting.

In adopting CCM the church made a serious decision, Anderson pointed out, knowing that there would be opposition. “As a church, we are concerned about those people and their consciences. We are prepared to listen, but we are not at the point that we will grant exceptions to an action the church has taken,” he said. —James Solheim

2000-004D

Episcopal Church in Burundi supporting fragile peace process

(ENS) A delegation from the Anglican Peace and Justice Network (APJN) returned from a late-November trip to Burundi sobered by the continuing violence but cautiously hopeful that the fragile peace process may have a chance.

“We were eager to express our solidarity with members of the Episcopal Church in Burundi, to listen to their stories of faith and suffering, and to encourage their participation in peace efforts. But we also wanted to see the situation for ourselves,” said the Rev. Brian Grieves, the Episcopal Church’s director of peace and justice ministries. The trip was in response to an open invitation from Bishop Pie Ntukamazina.

Burundi gained its independence from Belgium in 1962 and struggled with democracy until 1966 when ethnic Tutsis dominated the government. That lasted until 1993 when a new democracy was established. The assassination of the new president after just three months in office unleashed an era of chaos and retributions by the ethnic Hutu factions. The genocide killed an estimated 150,000 Tutsi and, since then, another 50,000-100,000 people have been killed in civil strife.

A 1996 coup “had the effect of calming the chaos that had gripped the country since 1993,” the delegation report said. “After a tense period, and with the helpful intervention of the Episcopal Church of Burundi and others, the elected National Assembly or parliament resumed its functions,” forming a government of national unity. “Since that time a painfully slow peace process has been established...” and Nelson Mandela of South Africa will moderate those efforts. The struggle has been to include those rebel groups who have engaged in armed conflict throughout the country. “A cease-fire to end the violence is not possible until these factions are brought into negotiations,” the delegation concluded.

“There is enormous distrust among the various political groups,” the report observed. “Civil society has a very low regard of politicians,” regarding some of them as “perpetrators of the genocide.” Yet there are signs of hope because “the government and political parties

working within the country have made impressive strides in reaching agreement on a framework for peace and a new government.”

The agreements call for a transition period of five years and a period of “democratic consolidation” for another five years. And there is agreement on a Truth and Reconciliation Commission, modeled on the experience in South Africa. “The progress in developing these agreements is remarkable given the recent genocide,” the report said. Yet the efforts have not been supported by the international community, provoking resentment in various parts of the government.

The delegation learned very quickly that the relations between Tutsis and Hutus is “very complicated,” concluding that “it is simplistic and even racist stereotyping” to assume that each hates the other. “Certainly, there is no doubt that there are factions in both ethnic groups who exploit ethnic differences and fuel hatred and commit horrendous atrocities. But it is also obvious that most Hutus and Tutsis are prepared to live together as neighbors much as they have done for centuries prior to the arrival of the colonists.”

“The Episcopal Church of Burundi has provided significant leadership during the current conflict, encouraging the different groups to join together for the good of the nation and to forge ahead towards peace,” the report concluded. In the wake of the 1996 coup the church’s role “may have prevented a further downward spiral of the violence and chaos,” serving with other churches as facilitators between the elected officials who went into hiding and the leaders of the coup. “This facilitation process made possible the success of forming the present government of unity” by helping to keep the elected officials in the country.

In its conclusion, the team said that it was leaving Burundi more hopeful than when it arrived and would not “underestimate the enormous task that lies ahead for the leadership of the country. “But it did find both a faithful church and many men and women in the government who hold the promise and the key to success.” The churches role in reconciliation, justice and truth will be crucial to the implementation of any peace agreements,” it said. —James Solheim

2000-005D

Tutu scolds church leaders for their complicit role in creating divisions

(ENS) Standing in the pulpit of Martin Luther King, Jr. in Atlanta’s historic Ebenezer Baptist Church, Archbishop Desmond Tutu reminded his audience that the greatest evils of the 20th century—including the racist apartheid policy in his native South Africa—were wrought by Christians, not pagans.

“It was Christians, you know, not pagans, who were responsible for the Holocaust. It was Christians, not pagans, who lynched people here in the South.... who burned people at the stake, frequently in the name of this Jesus Christ,” the Nobel laureate told participants in the annual meeting of the U.S. Conference for the World Council of Churches (WCC).

Christians should seek unity and reject the divisions that make reconciliation difficult, he argued. “We should cringe with shame at the chaotic situation in Jerusalem at the Church of the Holy Sepulcher,” he said, using the tension among different groups who claim space in the church as an example. “It has taken three years to get the Christian custodians to agree that a sewer cover should be removed and the sewer replaced,” Tutu said. “We should

hang our heads in shame that it could happen on the site of the Crucifixion.” He added, with that famous twinkle in his eyes, “If Christ had not risen from the dead we would say that he is turning in his grave.”

Tutu thanked the WCC for its support of the fight against apartheid in South Africa. Pointing to Pamela Chinnis, president of the Episcopal Church’s House of Deputies, he said that she was “one of those who came when the South African Council of Churches was being investigated by the South African government.” As a result of international support by the churches, “We in South Africa are now an extraordinary thing, a free country, trying to be non-racist and non-sexist... You are responsible for this victory.”

Tutu joined church leaders at the meeting for a visit to the crypt of King, placing a wreath in honor of the slain civil rights leader. King was slated to address the fourth assembly of the WCC in Sweden in July of 1968 but was assassinated three months before the meeting. Participants said that he was profoundly missed and his absence led the WCC to form the Program to Combat Racism and other justice programs.

Prof. Miroslav Volf of Yale Divinity School warned participants against seeking “cheap reconciliation,” suggesting that there are some crimes so horrible that reconciliation seems almost impossible. The Nazis may have been “masters of death” but the Holocaust is not an anomaly in today’s world. The systematic genocide in Kosovo and Rwanda “is a brutal and horrid testimony of exclusion... Reconciliation must be at the center of what Christians pursue. But how can Nazi and Jew, Kosovar and Serb, Hutu and Tutsi reconcile?” he asked.

Some seek “false ways” of resolving tensions, including “cheap reconciliation” that “gives up on justice.” He quoted Nietzsche’s observation that “all pursuit of justice rests on partial injustices and results in new injustices.” Reconciliation is possible only if factions are “unconditionally” willing to embrace one another,” he said. “The will to embrace includes the will to rectify the wrong that has been done.” —**James Solheim**

2000-006D

Clear Vision conference catches imagination and fuels positive changes for Church

(ENS) Camp Allen, situated in the piney woods of the Texas hill country, again played host to bishops and their staffs seeking a new, revitalized vision for their dioceses. “Encore, A Clear Vision of One Church,” drew more than 250 participants for the pre-Thanksgiving conference hosted by the Dioceses of Texas, Virginia, Maryland and Tennessee.

Sessions on visioning and church planting were augmented by 16 workshops and interactive panel discussions. “This year’s conference was primarily a ‘how to,’” building on the “big picture view” from last year’s conference said Carolyn Dicer of East Tennessee.

Stuart Entwistle, director of financial development from the Diocese of Maryland, was delighted at the “cross section of church leadership” present at the conference. “It’s critical to have insights about the strength of the church—to get a more global view,” he said. “It’s also rewarding to have the opportunity to share my ministry with a different group and get feedback—to know what I have can be of help to others.”

"We plan to plant a new church every year," said the bishop of Spain, Carlos Lopez, who brought four clergy and four lay leaders with him. For 40 years, the Anglican Church in Spain was forced underground by the government, he explained. "This conference has helped us identify our maintenance mentality and systemized our thoughts about what we must do to transform the culture of our Church."

During a panel discussion on leadership, the Rev. Hugh Magers, evangelism officer for the Episcopal Church, called for commissions on ministry to become proactive in seeking younger postulants. Calling the clergy shortage "a crisis," he said a bias against those younger than 35 has caused the problem. The dichotomy between clergy and lay leadership was also raised.

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2000-007D

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-Kathryn McCormick



news briefs

2000-008

Diocese of Washington honors Patti Brown

(ENS) The Diocese of Washington has recognized the outstanding dedication of Patricia Sparks Browning in her efforts toward bringing peace to the Israeli/Palestinian conflict. At its annual Peacemakers Award Dinner on December 8, the diocesan commission on peace honored Browning with its 1999 Peacemakers award at a celebration attended by more than 100 supporters across the diocese and the nation.

Mrs. Browning accompanied her husband, then Presiding Bishop Edmond L. Browning, on a visitation to the Diocese of Jerusalem in 1986. Moved by the struggle of Palestinians to reclaim their land, she began making regular pilgrimages, leading various delegations, pleading with the church and government not to turn a blind eye to the Palestinians who had lost their land and basic human rights.

In introducing Mrs. Browning, former ambassador to Zaire Brandon Grove spoke of her work: "This was an appeal to conscience, and reflected her commitment to peace and non-violence.... Patti stresses something we need to remember, although it sounds deceptively simple: we are all one human family, and suffering and injustice anywhere in the world touches us all."

In her comments, Mrs. Browning reminded the group that "the U.S. is Israel's closest ally and biggest benefactor, which brings with it the responsibility for the U.S. to step up and be an honest broker for a real peace on both sides."

Mrs. Browning took her concerns to the church's General Convention and went to Washington to make lawmakers aware of both sides of the dispute. Through her efforts, the Episcopal Church became a leader in advocating the rights of Palestinians to statehood and their claim to Jerusalem as their capital to be shared with Israel.

Previous recipients of this prestigious award include the Most Rev. Desmond M. Tutu (1998), the Hon. Paul H. Nitze (1997) and Marian Wright Edelman (1995).

The commission on peace was founded in 1982 by Bishop John T. Walker to develop and apply a Christian understanding of world affairs. Through the work of various committees, the commission serves as a focal point in Washington for peace and justice representatives from the global Anglican Communion. In 1999, it sponsored "A Future with Hope," the first-ever interfaith conference on restorative justice.

Religious leaders ask retailers to eliminate sweatshop abuses

(ENS) Leaders of five Canadian religious organizations printed an open letter in December 1999 calling on the Hudson's Bay Company and Sears Canada to take the lead in the negotiation of a Canadian voluntary code of conduct and implementation of principles to help eliminate sweatshop abuses in the apparel, shoe and related consumer products industries.

Leaders of the Anglican, Lutheran, Presbyterian and United churches and the Canadian Council for Reform Judaism released a message urging the companies to support the negotiation of a Canadian code that includes minimum labor standards expressed in International Labor Organization (ILO) conventions, and provisions for independent verification that those standards are being met.

The Episcopal commission for social affairs of the Canadian Conference of Catholic Bishops released a similar letter earlier.

Retailers and apparel and shoe manufacturers have been involved in code negotiations with labor, religious and non-governmental organizations since May, when the federal government agreed to convene and facilitate the process.

Civil society organizations are represented in code discussions by the Ethical Trading Action Group (ETAG), which includes the Canadian Council for International Cooperation, the Canadian Labor Congress, the Labor Behind the Label Coalition, the Steelworkers Humanity Fund, Ten Days for Global Justice, and the Union of Needletrades, Industrial and Textile Employees.

In their open letter, the religious leaders express their concern that without a strong commitment from industry leaders, code discussions may not have positive outcomes. They call upon the companies to provide renewed leadership in the multi-stakeholder discussions for an effective and credible code of conduct. It read, "Our members and other Canadians want verifiable assurances that all consumer products sold in Canada are made under humane working conditions."

Presiding Bishop's Fund now accepts contributions on-line

(ENS) The Presiding Bishop's Fund for World Relief (PBFWR) now accepts on-line contributions.

The PBFWR, which raises, receives and distributes funds for the relief of human suffering, included this alternative way of giving to strengthen its ability to help people in need rapidly and effectively.

"On-line donations will give people an opportunity to respond to a disaster or crisis immediately. Already many of us turn to the web to get information and to purchase goods, why not make contributions using the web," said Sandra Swan, executive director of the PBFWR.

To make contributions, donors simply go to the PBFWR web site at www.pbfr.org, click on the "Give Now" section to access the on-line donation site and proceed to a secure server.

ABS introduces African-American Jubilee Bible

(American Bible Society) The American Bible Society introduced the new African-American Jubilee edition of the Bible in conjunction with a Jubilee celebration on December 26, 1999.

This edition of the Bible addresses the biblical understanding of jubilee, offering commentary on African-American history, culture and faith. It documents the African-American heritage of hope and worship, chronicling African culture and tracing the presence of Africans in the Bible, the period of slavery, achievements of African-American church activism and the African-American struggle around the world.

In addition to the Old and New Testaments, the Jubilee Bible contains more than 300 pages of text and full-color illustrations, available in King James or Contemporary English versions.

Good Friday Offering

(ENS) In his annual Epiphany letter to all congregations, Presiding Bishop Frank T. Griswold has asked that Episcopalians continue to pray for their sisters and brothers in the Holy Land and to support the Good Friday Offering as an opportunity to demonstrate solidarity with Anglicans and all Christians in that region of the world.

According to Griswold, "The words of the Bishop of Jerusalem, the Rt. Rev. Riah Abu El-Assal, make plain the importance of the Good Friday Offering: 'I would like to take the opportunity to share my joy and express my appreciation to the Episcopal Church for working so diligently to support the Diocese of Jerusalem. I have no words to express my deep gratitude. Kindly convey my personal thanks and that of the diocese, clergy and laity to all our brothers and sisters in Christ who succeeded in breaking this record.'"

Since its inception, the offering has provided financial support to numerous ministries throughout the Middle East. Such as, the Boulac Social Service Center at All Saints' Cathedral in Egypt and a variety of programs in aid of Sudanese refugees in Eritrea and Ethiopia.

Good Friday Offering materials are available through Episcopal Parish Services at 800/903-5544.

Bishop-elect of Diocese of Eastern Oregon resigns

(ENS) The Rev. A. James MacKenzie, elected the sixth bishop of the Episcopal Diocese of Eastern Oregon at a December 4, 1999 convention, has resigned.

Bishop Rustin Kimsey said in a letter to the diocese that MacKenzie, rector of the Church of the Redeemer in Pendleton, resigned as bishop-elect following "three weeks of attention to the questions and issues before us" that had been raised about MacKenzie's "appropriateness for this office."

MacKenzie sent a letter to members of his parish and to the 3,700 Episcopalians in the diocese stating he had "engaged in inappropriate e-mail exchanges with four women over the past two years." The e-mails contained what he termed "unacceptable 'endearments' and 'romantic' allusions." He also admitted he was not truthful when first asked about these circumstances. He went on to say he deeply regretted the impact of his actions on the church as well as on his wife and their three sons.

As a result of a pastoral directive from Kimsey, MacKenzie will immediately begin a three-month medical leave of absence as Redeemer's priest. Kimsey said that he and the parish "are in agreement to assist James MacKenzie in receiving the counseling and spiritual guidance he needs to deal with these issues."

MacKenzie was named one of four finalists for the bishop's post after a national search process that lasted more than a year.

Companion Diocese Network learns of strides in program

(ENS) The struggle of a province toward autonomy and the inevitable isolation when that autonomy has been achieved was one area brought before the annual meeting of the Companion Diocese Network at Waycross Episcopal Camp and Conference Center in Indiana.

Representatives of seven of the Episcopal Church's nine provinces gathered to exchange the year's progress in companion diocese relationships in their provinces. As in past years, companion relationships have emphasized supporting education, exchanging visits, setting up and operating medical clinics and providing medical supplies, youth trips, vacation Bible schools and special projects such as house building and church painting.

According to a report, those present spoke highly of the benefits received by both dioceses in a typical exchange, mostly an increased understanding of culture and the sharing of spiritual riches.

Bishop Bill Skilton, of South Carolina, used the work of the Dominican Development Group and its focus on self-help projects to highlight the many difficulties facing provinces working toward autonomy. Insufficient financial undergirding and consequent maintenance-level funding for salaries, buildings and program call for new and creative ways to do mission. Skilton cited problems facing Haiti and Dominican Republic, a part of the forming Province of the Caribbean. He said we must take seriously the need to walk together with the churches of the emerging provinces.

Currently eight U.S. dioceses and 87 overseas dioceses are seeking relationships. For information on formation, guidelines and other aids, contact the Partnership Services Office at 815 Second Avenue, NY N.Y. 10017.

Special commission of WCC holds its first meeting

(WCC) At the conclusion of its first meeting in Morges, Switzerland, December 6 to 8, 1999, the Special Commission on Orthodox Participation in the World Council of Churches released a communique that identified the following four areas for intensive study this year:

- the organization of the WCC;
- the style and ethos of our life together in the WCC;
- theological convergences and differences between Orthodox and other traditions in the WCC and
- existing models and new proposals for a structural framework for the WCC that would make possible meaningful participation by Orthodox churches.

The WCC's eighth assembly in Harare, Zimbabwe, created the commission, which is composed of an equal number of representatives appointed by Eastern and Oriental Orthodox

churches and representatives from the other member churches of the WCC appointed by the Central Committee.

Catholicos Aram I of the Armenian Apostolic Church (Cilicia) and moderator of the WCC Central Committee, underscored that "the Orthodox presence in the WCC has enlarged the scope of the council's life and witness" and that the Orthodox churches in turn "have been enriched by their ecumenical involvement."

WCC General Secretary Konrad Raiser noted that this commission marked the first time that the WCC created an official body "with equal participation for the Orthodox churches and from the other member churches in the WCC." He suggested that "never before in its 50 years of history has the WCC taken its Orthodox member churches as seriously as with this decision."

The 60-member commission named a subcommittee, drawn from its own membership, to prepare a report for its next plenary meeting October 23 to 25.

Wisconsin ELCA, Catholic bishops respond to LCMS ad

(ELCA) Six Wisconsin bishops of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America (ELCA) placed a counter-advertisement in the December 19, 1999 *Milwaukee Journal-Sentinel* in response to the critical advertisement from the Rev. A.L. Barry, president of the Lutheran Church-Missouri Synod (LCMS) concerning the Joint Declaration on the Doctrine of Justification.

The declaration, which was signed October 31, 1999 in Augsburg, Germany, is a historic document that resolved one disagreement that has divided Roman Catholics and Lutherans since the early 1500s. The doctrine says "By grace alone, in faith in Christ's saving work and not because of any merit on our part, we are accepted by God and receive the Holy Spirit, who renews our hearts while equipping and calling us to good works."

In the ad, the bishops said they were "saddened" to read Barry's statements that the Roman Catholic Church teaches "that something more than trust in Christ is necessary for us to be saved." His ad also said the Roman Catholic Church teaches "we are able to merit, through our works, eternal life for ourselves and others."

Barry's ad continues, "We believe this teaching obscures the work of Jesus Christ and clouds the central message of the Bible." It also said the LCMS is intent on working for the day when "the pure Gospel of Jesus Christ" is proclaimed with one voice.

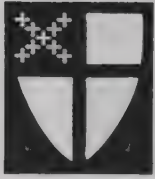
The Wisconsin ELCA and Roman Catholic bishops said Barry misstated Roman Catholic beliefs. Their ad read, "We have learned from our participation in ecumenical dialogues over the years the need to express accurately and clearly the beliefs of our partners as they understand them."

The bishops acknowledged differences still exist between Lutherans and Roman Catholics. They also pledged to work together to examine other disagreements that have divided the churches.

People

Dr. Joel L. Cunningham, president of Susquehanna University in Selinsgrove, Pennsylvania, was elected the 15th vice chancellor and president of the University of the South in Sewanee, Tennessee, on January 6, by the board of trustees.

Cunningham will succeed Dr. Samuel R. Williamson who retires in June.



news features

2000-009

Parliament of the World's Religions in South Africa presses for interfaith cooperation

by James Soiheim

(ENS) As meetings go, it is difficult to imagine a more complex, fascinating, frustrating one than the Parliament of World's Religions, which drew about 7,000 participants to Cape Town, South Africa, the first week in December.

A complex marketplace for nearly every major religion on earth, including a few that might be new to most people, the underlying themes were peace and interfaith cooperation, especially in the face of increasing sectarian violence in some parts of the world.

The setting was crucial to the meeting, giving participants a chance to take a closer look at the new South Africa, emerging from the dark era of apartheid but still struggling against economic disparities and persistent violence. The day before the parliament officially opened, a bomb in a popular beach town near Cape Town injured 48 people. It was the 80th pipe bomb in the last year and perpetuates the mystery of violence since no one claims credit. A local banker said that, if the violence continues, "we are in deep trouble" because foreign investments and tourists will disappear. "Cape Town is the keyhole through which the outside world views South Africa," he said.

An opening day rally near the Parliament Buildings in downtown Cape Town addressed another major issue for Africans—the pandemic of AIDS. It is the number one killer in sub-Saharan Africa, killing 10 times more people than war. In 1998 about 200,000 people died in wars, compared with about 2.2 million from AIDS. It was difficult not to notice the six-story condom on a downtown office building, urging the practice of safe sex.

Cleve Jones, founder of the Names Project that put together the massive AIDS quilt, told the crowd gathered around a display of panels, "Don't give up. You must believe, in the way you did during the dark days of apartheid, that one day there will be a cure or vaccine. You must fight to stay alive until that day," he said. "We wish to say to President Mbeki that the decision not to provide treatment to pregnant women with HIV is scientifically misinformed, economically unsound and morally bankrupt."

Participants then marched behind a peace flame through the busy streets, past St George's Anglican Cathedral, which Desmond Tutu made a center of the fight against apartheid, to District Six. It was once a mixed racial community of 60,000 forced by apartheid legislation in 1966 to move out of the city, leaving behind two churches standing as lonely sentinels on a deserted plain. The peace torch was used to light an Olympic-style basin of flame, kept alive during the meeting.

A time of transformation

In the opening plenary at Good Hope Centre, crawling with security, participants were welcomed by Mayor Nomaindia Mfeketo of Cape Town, in the absence of President Thabo Mbeki. She said that Cape Town is a very special city with two faces.

In profound and moving comments that seemed to describe the climate in much of the world beyond the continent of Africa, she said, "One is the physically beautiful city we see around us, the other is a more somber one associated with oppression, imposed values, cultural domination, slavery, repressive law-making and the imprisonment for their beliefs of many of our country's leaders, including Nelson Mandela," she said.

"One is a place of tree-lined streets, affluent families and spacious homes. The other is a place where poverty, joblessness, overcrowding, inadequate housing, ill health, hunger and fear is a reality.... Today we have a city divided against itself... Let this be the beginning of a real and lasting unity, in spite of all we think divides us. The example of acceptance in diversity, of sharing life experiences and a common yearning for spiritual meaning, is something all Capetonians should take to heart."

The Rev. Dirk Ficca, an American who is executive director of the Chicago-based Council for the Parliament of the World's Religions, said that the meeting came at "a time of transformation for the African continent.... We chose South Africa because of its rich religious diversity and because of the role religion has played in its life," he said. "The parliament is about religious harmony—not unity," he added. "Participants come fully as who they are. We are seeking convergence of purpose, not consensus. Our religious differences are not a problem to be solved but one to be celebrated... It is time to bring the voice of spirituality back to the table."

Addressing an issue that would haunt attitudes about the meeting, Ficca said that the planning committee decided not to decide what is or is not a religion. He then led an exercise to demonstrate who was present. Very few responded from South America or even Europe, but there was heavy representation from North America and South Africa. About 90 countries were represented. The majority identified themselves as Christians, with a sprinkling of Buddhists and Hindus and only a few Bahai, Zoroastrians and Sikhs.

A new interfaith agenda

The first parliament was held in 1893 in Chicago, in conjunction with the World's Columbian Exposition, when interfaith dialogue was a radical idea. But the world has changed, its religions are no longer isolated from each other, so a second parliament was convened a century later, also in Chicago. Planners made it clear at Cape Town that they hope to convene a parliament every five years or so.

"For some the lure of the Parliament was the opportunity it offered to listen and to share, to engage in serious dialogue with other faiths, other cultures, and other paths," said Jim Kenney, who helped plan both the 1993 and 1999 meetings. He said that the Chicago 1993 parliament, despite some sharp disagreements and heated exchanges, resulted in a "prevailing spirit of hope and shared commitment. Gradually a broad consensus emerged that a new international interfaith agenda, which would draw on the experience and expertise of existing institutions devoted to interreligious understanding, was an urgent necessity."

The last parliament produced a Call, originally drafted by Roman Catholic theologian Hans Kung, launching a "process of dissemination, consultation and emendation affirming the essential principles: No new global order without a new global ethic; every human being must be treated humanely; commitment to a culture of non-violence and respect for life, a culture of tolerance and a life of truthfulness, a culture of equal rights and partnership

between men and women, and a transformation of consciousness as the priority for the planetary community,” according to Kenney

Representing what he called “a moral convergence,” the global ethic “embodies the implicit promise that the world’s religions can begin to speak with a single voice on issues of concern to us all and that they can begin to draft a common language—not a common theology—but a coherent and shareable way of addressing universal challenge. Religion is not always at its best but perhaps the parliament represents a new stirring, a new reality,” he said.

Dazzling diversity

The plenary hall took on a carnival atmosphere with dozens of booths hawking different religious messages. Earnest young people passed out invitations to listen to their version of the truth, conveyed by a dazzling array of teachers, swamis, gurus, and priests. Where else could one see a Muslim mullah talking with a Hindu priest and a black Southern Baptist, joined by a Tibetan Buddhist nun, with shaved head, who is chattering away on her cell phone. A coven of witches from Chicago attracted quite a bit of attention, as did someone who claimed to be the 196th Pharaoh. Representatives of indigenous religions, especially from Africa and North America, were highly visible.

Yet that diversity provoked some controversy. When the parliament decided to use the broadest definition of religion, it curbed significant involvement of Roman Catholics, Orthodox and many mainline denominations. South Africa’s Chief Rabbi Cyril Harris said that the presence of pagans detracted from the real purpose of the parliament. “Religion should be democratic but the wider the definition the more one loses depth—the whole thing becomes an exercise in artificiality,” he said. “The fear is that one gets a bunch of weirdoes using the parliament to get publicity. I would prefer it to be more mainstream.”

The national chairman of the Council of African Traditional Religions, Nokuzola Mndende, suggested that the chief rabbi should learn to be more tolerant, like the Dalai Lama. “If South Africans are true to their liberation they must learn to be tolerant.” Elder Rowan Fairgrove, a Wiccan, said that neo-paganism was the fastest growing religion in the world and that it represented a genuine attempt to return to ancient spiritual practices, many of them downtrodden by mainstream religions like Christianity.

Anglican Archbishop Njongonkulu Ndungane, however, agreed with the rabbi. After the parliament he met with the Dalai Lama and said in a press interview that he was disappointed by the “unorthodox” religious groups who attended, especially the witches and neo-pagans. “It should not be open to everybody who says they are a religion.”

Mandela infuses excitement

The star power of Nelson Mandela, former president of South Africa, was palpable as he was welcomed to a special plenary. “This coming together in the southern-most city on the African continent symbolizes mutual inter-dependence and common humanity,” he told a crowd of over 5,000. He called the parliament “an affirmation of the nobility of the human spirit. “He said that the 20th century had seen more than its share of violence, suffering and pain but he argued against the cynicism of the age, contending that the parliament itself “counters that despairing cynicism.”

Accepting two awards for his efforts to fight violence, Mandela quickly paid tribute to “the ordinary, unsung men and women who in this century refused to bow to baser instincts of our nature.” They were the ones who “saved our world from even more genocide,” putting an end to tyrants and dictators, but also helping us finally realize that “poverty is the single most dangerous threat to society today.”

Echoing a theme that he had used at the 1998 Assembly of the World Council of Churches in Zimbabwe, Mandela said, "My generation is the product of religious education," when only the religious groups would educate blacks. "Without these religious institutions I would never have been here today." He added, "To really appreciate religion you had to be in a South African jail under apartheid, where you could see the cruelty of human beings to each other in its naked form. Again, religious institutions and their leaders gave us hope that one day we would return."

Brushing aside claims that the anti-apartheid movement was dominated by radical elements, he said, "Religion was one of the motivating forces of everything we did." And he argued that "religion will have a crucial role inspiring humanity to meet the enormous challenges we face."

He ended by suggesting that the South African experience in "settling a deep and long-standing conflict" might be an example for others because it proves that "common ground is greater than what divides people."

Many visited nearby Robben Island to dedicate a peace pole and look at the small jail cell where Mandela spent most of his 27 years in confinement until his release in 1990.

Assembly produces Call to Guiding Institutions

While participants waded through a list of over 800 workshops, symposia, seminars, lectures, performances, exhibits and concerts, an "inner core" group of about 400 church leaders met in a closed assembly, hammering out a new draft of a statement that emerged from the 1993 meeting. Their task included efforts to design ways to impact the eight "guiding institutions" of society, including: governments; agriculture, labor, industry and commerce; education; arts and communications media; science and medicine; intergovernmental institutions; and voluntary associations. And they designed a list of hundreds of projects, which they called gifts, that would draw together people of faith around the world.

According to the planners, participants in the assembly were chosen for their spiritual leadership within different religious traditions. "The key criteria are whether a person is known and respected in a tradition—and engaged in real work to address issues," according to Jim Kenney.

"The assembly has been very problematic because it has been poorly focused," argued the Rev. Eric Beresford of the Anglican Church of Canada. He said that the assembly attempted to advance the work of the Global Ethic that emerged from the 1993 parliament. He thinks that ethic needs more work, and that didn't happen at the assembly. "Specifically for me, it's the perspective from which we look at moral issues—the choice to look from the bottom up rather than the top down." The perspective is missing from the Call to Guiding Institutions, he said. "We have done a half-baked job of everything," including the list of projects or gifts, most of which are not even new. Too many players are not at the table, which diminishes the impact of the Call.

Bishop Alan Chester of England, representing the archbishop of Canterbury, felt that the best part of the parliament was listening to one another's stories, with respect but without compromise of beliefs. He said it was a "tense time" in relations among religions but held out the hope that it would be possible to take practical steps of cooperation and to "speak out together on appropriate issues."

He deplored the absence of Roman Catholics and Orthodox and questioned the definitions of religion. He said that the parliament, and the assembly in which he participated, was "a noble concept, still in its infancy. But if major religions are to take it seriously, we must ask what is a world religion."

Bishop William Swing of California, a member of the assembly, said that it was difficult to read the map of interfaith dialogue and action "because it hasn't been written yet and everyone is operating with different definitions." He said that the parliament is "inventing itself as it goes along and therefore seems a bit chaotic, with little order and no map." Yet he is convinced that interfaith cooperation is becoming a necessity, not a luxury. The spiritual benefit is that it drives us deeper into our own traditions. While the dialogue is still in its early stages, he believes, it is being pushed by the developing reality that we are living closer together. "The Episcopal Church has a chance to get out in front of this issue, like it did with the AIDS crisis," he said.

Ms. Midge Roof, associate director of the ecumenical office, carries the interfaith dialogue portfolio and attended the parliament as the church's representative. She agreed with Swing. "The impetus is coming from the pews, not from the top down. As we get to know our neighbors better, we are realizing that we are not strictly a Christian nation any more." The Episcopal Church is in the early stages of determining where to invest its energy in interfaith dialogue, she said.

Dalai Lama speaks at closing plenary

Parliament leaders used the closing plenary for some assessments. A South African member of the planning committee called it "a banquet for the soul," while others said that the confusing program was more of an "indigestible smorgasbord." Amy Marks, co-chair of the parliament, said that it was "a dream realized," building what she called "bridges of understanding. Someone else called it "a magnificent failure."

Kenney introduced the Dalai Lama, exiled leader of Tibetan Buddhists, who had endorsed the parliament based on his conviction that it was "absolutely vital" that religious leaders meet and talk. At an earlier press conference he was asked about the apparent "snub" by President Mbeki, who declined to meet privately with him in apparent deference to pressure from the Chinese. The Dalai Lama said that it was "understandable" since governments must act in national interest.

An editorial in the *Cape Argus* newspaper strongly criticized Mbeki for "excuses not to meet one of the strongest symbols of peace, freedom and spirituality in modern history," at the same time that the government was providing "sanctuary to one of Africa's most evil men, former Ethiopian dictator Mengistu Haile Mariam," who was in South Africa for medical treatment.

Tibetans are not calling for independence, the Dalai Lama pointed out. "We have a right to self-determination but we are not asking for independence, irrespective of the past. We want the Chinese to give us genuine autonomy. Under the present situation, Tibetan culture is facing extinction.... Some form of cultural genocide is taking place. If this culture is destroyed," he said, "in the future I'm sure there will be many Chinese who will have immense regret." He recognizes China's need for stability and unity but said that its government has "overreacted because deep inside the Chinese leadership is a sense of insecurity." Yet he is convinced that Tibet will ultimately have self-rule because "China is in the process of changing and there is no possibility of turning back."

In his address to the plenary, he said that change comes only through action, not meditation or prayer, and he urged participants to go into areas of conflict and contribute in solving them. Instead of trying to propagate one's religion, it was more important to seek the common good. "It is important to care and to help others, but to seek inner peace and strength so that one is better equipped to help others," he said. "All human beings have a responsibility to look after themselves and the planet." He urged everyone to be open, unbiased and skeptical in the search for truth.

And now what?

While participants attempted to sort through their experience and decide what to tell the folks back home, several concrete steps might make that easier.

It was announced that a Millennium World Peace Summit would bring together a thousand religious leaders at the United Nations this August, just before the Heads of State Summit. They will be welcomed by UN General Secretary Kofi Annan. The four-day event, which will include an open forum and dialogue among the participants, will be televised.

The hope is that the religious leaders will "support the peace process, in concert with the political bodies there," according to Bawa Jain, executive coordinator. He said that the summit is based on the conviction that the "religious and spiritual communities can play a substantial role in easing tensions in the world zones of conflict. Ultimately, this first-ever council of senior religious and spiritual advisors will be established as a resource to the UN General Secretary," he said.

Many participants left reinforced and encouraged that a common vision of a just and peaceful society was emerging. "I came to realize more and more," said Kung, "that religion is a political issue—not just an academic affair. It has many political ramifications. There will be no peace among nations without peace among the religions and no peace among the religions without dialogue."

--James Solheim is director of the Episcopal Church's Office of News and Information.

2000-010

Hero or heretic, Spong won't be forgotten

by Ed Stannard

(Episcopal Life) No, he's not riding into the sunset, and he will not go gentle into that good night.

John Shelby Spong is retiring as bishop of the Diocese of Newark at the end of January, but he's not likely to cease being a lightning rod for controversy.

Like everything else he says and does, that will elicit both gratitude and apoplexy from Episcopalians.

Spong, bishop of Newark since 1976, and the most senior diocesan bishop in the church, will begin a lectureship at Harvard University on Feb. 1. Just as his lectures in Newark have later been published as books challenging the Virgin Birth, Jesus' physical resurrection and other doctrines, so too will his work at Harvard.

As his tenure as diocesan bishop draws to a close, the spotlight focused on him is likely to dim. But it is difficult to imagine someone else taking his place as the most controversial bishop of the late 20th century.

Spong sees his most significant legacy as helping to develop “a theologically and biblically literate laity,” by translating the work of academics into the language of the non-scholar. That work either brings Christian belief into the 21st century or denies it altogether, depending on who is reviewing it. “I would guess, though, that some of my theological suggestions and questions will not seem so radical in 10 years,” says Spong.

His other legacy, that of leading the effort to bring gays and lesbians into the church’s full sacramental life, is pretty much complete, he says, despite the controversy that still rages in the church and throughout the Anglican Communion.

“I think that’s a battle that’s won,” says Spong, even though “it doesn’t feel like it all the time.”

Spong’s 23 years as bishop has been marked by some of the most notorious events in the recent history of the Episcopal Church, including:

- The ordination of the first openly gay priest in the church, Robert Williams, who later denounced monogamy and was fired by Spong from his post as director of The Oasis, a ministry to gays.
- A shouting match in the House of Bishops at the 1991 General Convention, in which he called Bishop John MacNaughton of the Diocese of West Texas homophobic. MacNaughton had objected to homosexuals being named to a task force on sexuality. The argument led to then-Presiding Bishop Edmond L. Browning calling the bishops into executive session to try to heal the breach.
- A statement of “personal privilege” at the 1994 convention that has become known as the Koinonia Statement, in which Spong asserted that he would recognize monogamous homosexual relationships and ordain gays and lesbians who are “wholesome examples.” The statement is often cited as a litmus test by evangelicals against the 88 bishops who joined Spong in signing it.
- The presentment in 1995-96 of Bishop Walter Righter, who, as assistant bishop in Newark, ordained the Rev. Barry Stopfel, another openly gay man, to the diaconate. Spong later ordained Stopfel a priest. (Last year, Stopfel resigned as rector of his parish, citing in part the stress brought on by the publicity of the hearings; the court ruled there was no “core doctrine” against the ordination and the case did not go to trial.)
- A “Message to the Anglican Communion on the Subject of Homosexuality,” issued in November 1997, which became the first shot across the bow of the 1998 Lambeth Conference on the subject of gays in the church. Archbishop of Canterbury George L. Carey called it “hectoring and intemperate.”
- An interview just before Lambeth with Carey’s son, Andrew, an editor for the Church of England newspaper, in which Spong said African Christians had “moved out of animism into a very superstitious kind of Christianity. They’ve yet to face the intellectual revolution of Copernicus and Einstein that we’ve had to face in the developing world; that is just not on their radar screen.”
- His 1998 “Call for a New Reformation,” with its 12 Theses, based on his book, *Why Christianity Must Change or Die*. In the book, Spong says theism, “God as a personal being with expanded supernatural, human and parental qualities,” does not work for 21st-century Christians and his theses expand the idea to say that the idea of Jesus as the incarnation of God is “bankrupt” and that the biblical creation story is “pre-Darwinian mythology and post-Darwinian nonsense.”

Protégé of Robinson, not Pike

Many consider Spong merely a publicity hound. Spong says he actually used to hate the limelight. Now, however, he welcomes it "because it helps me get my message out."

Certainly no other bishop ignites the flames of indignation and outrage that Spong does. Certainly no other figure could inspire a book with the personally pointed title, *Can a Bishop Be Wrong? Ten Scholars Challenge John Shelby Spong*. In it, writers such as Bishop James M. Stanton of the Diocese of Dallas and Bishop C. FitzSimons Allison, retired bishop of the Diocese of South Carolina, attempt to "correct an imbalance" of publicity given to Spong's theological views, as Dean Peter C. Moore of Trinity Episcopal School for Ministry, the book's editor, writes in the introduction.

Unfortunately for the authors, the imbalance in book sales still weighs heavily in Spong's favor.

"The fundamentalist has no better friend than John Shelby Spong," writes Stanton, who was unavailable for an interview. "No one demonstrates better the futility of liberal religion."

For some, Spong follows in the legacy of Bishop James Pike, the flamboyant bishop of the Diocese of California who was charged with heresy in 1966 and who died in the Israeli desert in 1969. Spong, however, considers himself a follower of English theologian John A.T. Robinson, whose book *Honest to God* Spong considers a life-changing book. Robinson also wrote about a non-theistic God, one that can be defined in Paul Tillich's words as the "ground of all being."

"That book really changed my life," said Spong of *Honest to God*. "He just said it in a way that you couldn't avoid it anymore; you had to face those theological issues."

Hero to gays, lesbians

Spong also considers former Presiding Bishop John M. Hines a mentor for his integrity and courage in standing up for civil rights.

Spong has taken on the mantle of champion of the oppressed, first for African-Americans and later for gays and lesbians. He is a hero in the gay community, especially in Newark.

The Rev. Canon Elizabeth Kaeton, director of The Oasis, a ministry for homosexuals and others in the diocese—the ministry founded by Robert Williams—nearly chokes up when talking about Spong, whom she calls "larger than life for many of us; he's a real hero in the classic sense of that word."

Kaeton and others, such as Louie Crew, founder of Integrity, the national gay and lesbian caucus, said Spong's respect in the gay community stems from his willingness to get in front of an issue, despite no personal stake in it.

"How do you talk about your founder?" said Kaeton. Spong is "the person who has stood in solidarity with you, especially when the winds of adversity were not only howling at your door but threatening to blow down the house? How do you express your gratitude for that?"

Bring God to the people

When asked what Spong's greatest legacy would be, however, Crew did not mention his advocacy for gays and lesbians. For Crew, Spong's ability to popularize theological thought is a bigger contribution to the church—"keeping the mind open to new possibilities, turning off the tremolo when we talk about Scripture."

Spong considers himself a "teaching bishop" and has often given two lecture series a year, which have been the basis for many of his books. Crew says those lectures have been

packed with business people and others who are not necessarily Christians. Attracting people to studying the Bible who are not church folk—"clearing the clutter and getting people engaged with it"—is what Crew calls his great achievement.

Of course, Spong's theological opponents see no achievement in what they see as merely "pandering to the Zeitgeist," as Allison says, alluding to Reinhold Niebuhr.

"He has a real knack for appealing to the spirit of this age," says Allison. But Allison says Spong has denied the basic Christian beliefs he vowed to uphold as a bishop.

"He cannot hold the '12 Theses' and say the creeds without perjuring himself." The result of Spong's influence, he says, is that "there are no boundaries now that are enforceable about doctrine."

On one point Spong and his intellectual foes agree—it is more important to be forthright about belief than to stay quiet and violate those beliefs in actions such as blessing same-sex unions. But Allison says that if Spong were truly honest, he would resign as a bishop. "It's not only a question of theology, it's a question of honor."

Another observer, Douglas LeBlanc, an evangelical Episcopalian who is associate editor of *Christianity Today*, agrees that Spong has the courage of his convictions (the title of Spong's upcoming autobiography is "Here I Stand").

"Bishop Spong's willingness to take the heat for what he believes in is one of the things I most admire about him and I think the House of Bishops would be a healthier house if more bishops on the left were as candid as Bishop Spong about what they believe, or don't believe, in the Christian faith."

But LeBlanc also says that, when it comes to his denial of a supernatural God who performs miracles that cannot be explained by reason and science, Spong is "breathtakingly deluded on that point."

LeBlanc, former editor of *United Voice*, newspaper of the conservative group Episcopalians United, grants that there are "any number of people who are Episcopalians today who would not be if it were not for Jack Spong's books." But he wonders how many of those converts move beyond Spong to a true Trinitarian theology: "whether people will see that the Nicene Creed is a statement of objective reality. If the creed is a symbol system that we can interpret any way we please, then, as Flannery O'Connor says, 'The hell with it.' ...

"If Christianity is not supernatural and if what we are told in the gospels is not true, being part of the church is not worth the pain," continues LeBlanc. "But because it is true, it's worth every bit of the pain."

For his part, Spong says he does believe the creeds—he just interprets them through a post-modern lens. Citing the problem that for every person saved by a "miracle," others are not, Spong says, "The real issue for me is that there are far more theological problems in attributing to God miraculous powers than in not attributing them."

Through it all, though, Spong says he has not become an atheist. Asked his definition of God, he says, "I see God in Jesus and the reason I remain a Christian is that Jesus to me defines both God and human life uniquely. Jesus is for me the ultimate God-presence." Spong says that in him [Spong], God is fractured, but in Jesus he is unfractured. Spong continues, "I don't ever want to be apart from the church," which he calls a "purifying community."

He won't leave the church, but on the last day of January, Spong will walk out of his diocesan office and head for Harvard. His life will be different. But don't expect him to keep quiet.

—Ed Stannard is the news editor of *Episcopal Life*, the church's national monthly newspaper.

2000-011

A call to renew support for the church's ministry with the deaf

by J.D. Ellertson

(ENS) Bringing together representatives from across the country, a seminar last fall sponsored by the accessibility task force of the Diocese of Southern Ohio sought to review and recharge the Episcopal Church's longstanding commitment to ministry for and among deaf persons.

The Rev. Virginia W. Nagel of Syracuse, New York, provided a thorough background on the history of the deaf from 1800. "The Episcopal Church was the first church in the United States to minister to the deaf community," she said in her keynote speech, adding that it was the first church to permit deaf people to run their own congregations, and the first church to ordain deaf people to the priesthood.

"We have much to be proud of in our past," she reflected. "However, there hasn't been much support for such ministry to the deaf and hearing-impaired for the past 25 years. I hope this seminar is a sign that this unique type of ministry will come to life again in the tradition of the church and its founder."

Nagel is president of the church's Conference of the Deaf, vicar of Ephphatha Parish of the Deaf in the Diocese of Central New York, and priest-in-charge of the Henry Winter Syle Ministry with the Deaf in the Diocese of Albany.

"Less than 10 percent of deafness is hereditary," she told the seminar audience at the Procter Camp and Conference Center. "This means that hearing parents have deaf children, and deaf parents usually have hearing children. Pastorally this presents a dilemma. Currently we have between 65 and 70 congregations for deaf Episcopalians affiliated with the Episcopal Conference of the Deaf. This begs the question, how can we serve the needs of the deaf?"

Nagel also called attention to the fact that the deaf don't easily understand the English language. "A 5-year-old hearing student has a spoken vocabulary of over 5,000 words. A deaf student has a vocabulary of three to five words.

Bilingually proficient

"It seems clear that the church has the obligation to minister to the deaf community in a way that they can understand and accept. If we are to minister to the deaf, we must become bilingually proficient in both speech and signing. I might add, the language of signs is a legitimate language. Many schools and universities accept fluency in sign language as fulfilling a language requirement for graduation. Sign language is also the third most used language in the United States today," she said.

Another speaker explained that she lost her hearing as a young child, but was fortunate to have a mother who was a speech therapist. "You'll never know how many throats of people she made me touch to feel the vibrations. Her caring and insistence on my learning is the reason why I'm able to speak today."

One of the biggest problems for the deaf is the feeling of isolation, she said. How would you feel if you were cut off from the major sources of information—no radio, no TV, no movies—and totally left out of dinner-table conversations? How would this change your behavior? You'd become withdrawn; you'd have little self-esteem. You'd avoid groups of people. You'd become isolated from the rest of the world. This is the cycle that the church

can help break. This is why it is important for the hearing to learn about the deaf and learn from the deaf.

Nagel noted that the Episcopal Church was the first church to allow deaf people to run their own congregations in a signed service. This is the traditional and preferred model. A little thought will show why. Since we belong to a sacramental church, who would want an interpreter present at confession or at marriage counseling?

The hearing community needs to be more inclusive, she said. If the deaf community attends a hearing church, new challenges arise. If deaf congregants are not part of the vestry, not asked to serve on the Altar Guild, not asked to usher, don't read the lessons or the prayers of the people, they don't really become an active part of the whole body of Christ.

Learn from each other

Nagel also pointed out how we can learn from each other. For example, she explained, the deaf community runs its affairs in a different manner. In a hearing vestry meeting, something will be moved, seconded, discussed briefly and voted upon. Those who supported the losing side will swallow their disappointment and go on working for the good of the whole group.

In the deaf vestry meeting, something will be moved and seconded. Then it will be discussed until a consensus is reached. There will be no losing side, everyone will be pretty much satisfied, and that is that. But the discussion will have gone on and on until everyone is content.

There are other differences, Nagel stated. Why should the deaf members of a hearing church get excited about a fund drive for repairing the organ, a choir concert or the hiring of a new organist? Often, the differences can be bridged by common sense; the problem is the common-sense moves are seldom made.

The Episcopal Conference of the Deaf (ECD) is the official agency of the Episcopal Church for ministry with deaf people. Nagel said, "We have a sign-language version of the hymnal and are currently producing a sign-language version of the Episcopal Eucharistic Lectionary. ECD also conducts workshops for lay leaders, lay readers and church officers. We are also responsible for the advocacy for the deaf within the Episcopal Church. Generally, ECD serves as a clearinghouse for information and resources on ministry with the deaf within the Episcopal Church."

An ecumenical discussion panel made the point that at least 90 percent of those in the deaf community are not church-going people. They emphasized the importance of building a one-on-one relationship with a deaf person; building rapport and trust.

"It would be unfair of me not to let you know that this is one difficult kind of ministry," Nagel concluded, "but it is also one of the most rewarding."

—J.D. Ellertson, an active communicant in the Diocese of Southern Ohio, contributes often to *Interchange*, the diocesan newspaper, in which this article first appeared.

2000-012

Icons bring new 'visual scripture' to Church Center's chapel

by Kathryn McCormick

(ENS) To artist Kathryn Carrington, icons are visual scripture, meant to complement the music and liturgy that regularly fill a church. The fact that two icons she has painted were recently installed in the Chapel of Christ the Lord at the Episcopal Church Center in New York City seems a natural step if the church is to consider all forms of art in worship.

"I'm delighted, of course," she said in an interview on December 8, the day that the icons were dedicated in a service at which Presiding Bishop Frank T. Griswold presided. An Episcopalian, Carrington noted with a smile that of all the icons she has painted in her Manchester, Vermont, studio, these were the first to find homes in an Episcopal church.

Griswold himself commissioned the works. After seeing them mounted on a wall, joining two other icons mounted elsewhere in the chapel, he declared he was "pleased beyond words. They are more beautiful than I had envisioned they might be."

The dedication was a pleasing step in a remarkable journey that, Carrington admitted, "hasn't always been a piece of cake."

The fact that she had painted them at all would at one time have seemed at odds with her life and work. "The first time I saw an icon I thought it was awful," she recalled, laughing. A graduate of the University of Michigan, where she earned bachelor's and master's degrees in fine arts, she also studied at Yale University, L'Ecole des Beaux Arts in Paris and Chelsea College in London.

It was an impressive start, she agreed, but acknowledged later that her life also had taken her through some hard times. As a young widow with two children, she struggled as a single parent, then endured a long and debilitating illness that, for all its pain, nurtured her spiritual growth.

She recovered, and eventually met Gregory Norbet, a former monk who has won distinction as a composer, speaker and retreat director. They married in 1987.

Icon on the mantle

"A friend sent us an icon card for our wedding," Carrington recalled. She said she set it on a mantle and found herself lighting candles near it and saying prayers. "After a year, I wondered if I could paint one. It just wouldn't go away."

At that time she was busy as an artist (landscape watercolors and abstract paintings on her handmade paper) and an art consultant to many big firms and agencies. Her works are in the collections of IBM, Hyatt Regency, the U.S. State Department and Gannett Publishing, among others. She made room in her life, however, to study the art of icons and their history.

"A big part of icon painting is Tradition, with a capital T," she explained. That tradition, she added, "has been treasured and protected for us by the Eastern Church."

Although icons grew out of the mosaic and fresco tradition of early Byzantine art, it was the Russian Orthodox Church that embraced iconography after Constantinople fell to the Ottoman Empire. Unlike western art, which sought to reflect space and movement, icon art focused on the symbolic or mystical aspects of the divine being.

Carrington studied this tradition for years, working with a nun and a priest, and studying with masters of the technical aspects of medieval church art. The work combined

beautifully with what she had learned earlier in the Spiritual Directors Program of Shalem Institute for Spiritual Formation in Washington, D.C.

Her first icon was painted for a Roman Catholic parish on Long Island. She has painted others for churches, as well as private collections and for a monastery.

She met Griswold through her husband; the presiding bishop first visited Norbet's monastery as a priest in 1965, she said. She added that she got to know Griswold's wife, Phoebe, during the years that Griswold served as bishop of Chicago. The bishop, in fact, commissioned a small icon from Carrington, which he carried with him while traveling during the discernment period before he was elected presiding bishop in 1997.

When Griswold asked her to paint icons for the Church Center chapel, she said, she was proud and pleased to do them. Griswold noted that another icon in the chapel was the work of the Rev. John Walsted, an Episcopal priest from Staten Island, New York. A smaller icon was a gift to the late Presiding Bishop John Allin.

"There are so many creative people in our church," Griswold said. "I believe one of my functions is to bring attention and provide support to the talents of all those in our community."

Painting in prayer

Carrington began painting her icons in late 1998. "I paint each icon in prayer," she said. "I believe that I am receiving help as I work on it, that Christ is in my work for people to see."

Each icon slowly evolves, revealing itself over months of time, she said. Of the icons in the chapel, she said, "I wanted Christ to look very serene, and I wanted Mary to look tender, but strong."

Both Christ and Mary are portrayed as dark-skinned people, not discernable as members of any specific race, she said, adding, "I strove to make Christ raceless. He transcends that."

"Icons have their own power," Griswold said later. "They are a form of pictorial scripture. Growing numbers of people in the West, who have been starved for something more intuitive to balance western rationality, have found them to be a window to divine mystery."

"They are profoundly interesting. Because they come from the East, they transcend all the divisions we have experienced in western Christianity. Maybe it's through icons that we are receiving a sense of mystery that has been so much a part of eastern Christianity."

--Kathryn McCormick is associate director of the Office of News and Information of the Episcopal Church.

2000-013

A statement on the murder of Private First Class Barry Winchell

On the night of July 3, 1999, Private Barry Winchell, a twenty-one-year-old soldier stationed at Fort Campbell, Kentucky, was brutally murdered because he was gay. In violation of the "Don't Ask, Don't Tell, Don't Pursue" policy of the Department of Defense regarding the sexual orientation and conduct of service members, in violation of the military's good order and discipline, and in violation of the most fundamental of human rights Barry Winchell was relentlessly taunted, harassed and murdered in his sleep.

We deplore this crime of hate and violence and call the Army, the Department of Defense and the highest levels of our government to create a command climate and military environment where such violence cannot occur.

More than four decades ago the Armed Forces of our nation took the lead against crimes of discrimination and racism in the military. More than two decades ago the American military addressed itself to the inequalities of gender bias. Today all occupational specialties, except the most dangerous and demanding, are open to both women and men. Now the Armed Forces must create an environment where a person's sexual preference is not the basis for discrimination, and where gays and lesbians enjoy the same rights and security as heterosexual persons.

At this season of Christmas, we remember not only the birth of Jesus in Bethlehem, but also Herod's brutal slaughter of countless innocent children. Barry Winchell's murder is an example of the fear and hate and violence of which we are still capable. There is no better way to honor the birth of Jesus than to prepare a world where he can be born, nurtured and protected in the birth and life of every person.

The Rt. Rev. Charles L. Keyser
Bishop for the Armed Forces

The Rev. George E. Packard
Bishop-elect for the Armed Forces

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reviews and resources

2000-014

A call for posters by the church's young people

(ENS) The Presiding Bishop's Fund for World Relief and the cluster of offices for Ministries with Young People have invited children and youth in the Episcopal Church to contribute to a poster display to be installed at General Convention next July in Denver.

The posters will focus on the meaning of mission.

In a letter sent to teachers and parents throughout the church, the fund recalled the words of the post-communion prayer seeking the strength and courage to love and serve the Lord. Children and youth are to be asked to look at ways that bring this weekly prayer to life, the moments when they have been reconcilers in the world, and how they have made God's love known to others.

"The young people of our Church showed great initiative in the past year by working together to raise money for The Presiding Bishop's Fund and thus highlighting the needs of others. From Kentucky to California, from Connecticut to Michigan and all points in between, young people have shown how deeply they care," the letter said.

The letter asks for posters that will inspire others to share their time, creativity and money to help others. The convention display will be organized by age groups, starting at 3 and going through 19.

Each poster must be no larger than 18 inches by 27 inches and can use any media. Each must be accompanied by a letter explaining the poster's story or design and accompanied by an entry form. Deadline for entries is April 15, 2000.

For more information, contact Joyce Hogg of the Presiding Bishop's Fund at 800-334-7626, x6027, or visit the fund's web site at www.pbfwr.org.

Intern program in North Carolina seeks applicants

The Johnson Intern Program, sponsored by the Chapel of the Cross in Chapel Hill, North Carolina, is a new program being offered for young adult Christians and beginning in August 2000. This internship program offers a unique blend of social ministry, intellectual inquiry, and Christian community living in a post-baccalaureate year. The Johnson Intern

Program is designed to foster spiritual growth and development within the context of Christian service and fellowship.

This program asks interns to divide their time between working in a local nonprofit agency, pursuing serious study on a religious topic under the supervision of a parish mentor, and creating and living in Christian community. Interns may choose to take one or two classes at the University of North Carolina, or participate in the Deacon Formation Program classes, or an intern may opt to create their own spiritual study discipline. Some of the possible opportunities for social service placements include working with groups devoted to easing the plight of the homeless, opposing the death penalty, improving the lives of migrant workers, prison ministry, and working with at-risk youth.

All interns will participate in a communal lifestyle of simple living, sharing meals and household responsibilities with other community members. Working together, the interns must also undertake the serious task of developing their spiritual discipline as a group for the ordering of their common life. Another important part of the program will be weekly seminars devoted to theological reflection, and increasingly to vocational discernment as the year progresses.

The Johnson Intern Program will be open to people ages 20-29. The interns will be provided with a simple living stipend, health insurance, and housing. The Johnson Internship is an 11-month commitment. Applications are now available. The deadline for receiving applications is March 1. Anyone interested in more information should contact the program developer, Elizabeth Shows, at (919) 929-2193, via e-mail at eshows@thechapelofthecross.org or write to Johnson Internship Program, 304 East Franklin Street, Chapel Hill, NC 27514.

“God at 2000” telecast features theological scholars

Trinity Institute’s 31st annual national conference, “God at 2000,” featuring the remarks of some of today’s best-known theological scholars, will take place at Oregon State University on Feb. 11 and 12. The conference will examine how God is viewed at this moment in history, using high-tech satellite and internet technologies to engage in dialogue and debate.

Televised live nationally from Corvallis, Oregon, “God at 2000” will bring together seven men and women from the worlds of Islam, Judaism, and Christianity to reveal how they see the sacred. Featured speakers include: Marcus Borg, professor of religion and culture at Oregon State; Diana Eck, professor of comparative religion and Indian studies and Harvard; Lawrence Kushner, noted rabbi, lecturer and author; Joan Chittister, prominent Benedictine sister, author and lecturer; Seyyed Hossein Nasr, professor of Islamic studies at George Washington University; Karen Armstrong; acclaimed writer and television broadcaster; and Desmond Tutu, Nobel Peace Prize laureate and retired archbishop of Capetown, South Africa.

Modeled on the highly successful “Jesus at 2000” symposium held at Oregon State in 1996, “God at 2000” will be telecast over ECTN, the Episcopal Cathedral Teleconferencing Network, to 600 downlink communities, reaching a nationwide audience of 25,000. Following each speaker’s talk, on-site and broadcast audiences will participate interactively.

To attend the live event at Oregon State, registrants must call (541) 737-6195. To view the conference at a downlink site, call (800) 559-ECTN. The event can also be viewed by webcast over the internet at www.ectn.org.

The conference is co-sponsored by the Hundere Endowment for Religion and Culture at Oregon State University, the Chautauqua Institution of Chautauqua, New York, and Trinity Institute, of Trinity Church Wall Street, Manhattan.—**Kathryn Soman**

Photographs included in this issue of ENS:

1. AIDS rally opens Parliament of World's Religions in South Africa (2000-009)
2. Mandela's prison cell on Robben Island draws participants at Parliament of the World's Religions (2000-009)
3. Parliament of the World's Religions offers over 800 workshops and seminars to participants (2000-009)
4. Dalai Lama featured speaker at Parliament of the World's Religions meeting in Cape Town (2000-009)
5. Former President Nelson Mandela welcomes Parliament of the World's Religions to South Africa (222-009)
6. Icon of Our Lady of Tenderness (2000-012)
7. Icon of Christ the Lord (2000-012)
8. Artist Kathryn Carrington in her studio with some of her work (2000-012)
9. Episcopal Church in Liberia hopes to rebuild schools destroyed in civil war (2000-001)
10. Episcopal Church in Liberia hopes to rebuild schools destroyed in civil war (2000-001)
11. Church buildings in Monrovia heavily damaged during Liberia's civil war (2000-001)
12. Children returning to classes as Episcopal Church in Liberia rebuilds after civil war (2000-001)
13. Episcopal Church of Liberia rebuilding after years of civil war (2000-001)
14. Episcopal Church in Liberia slowly rebuilding after years of civil war (2000-001)
15. Episcopal Church of Liberia welcomes students as it rebuilds following civil war (2000-001)
16. Episcopal Church of Liberia seeking to rebuild schools damaged during civil war (2000-001)

(All black and white photos are available in color)

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